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THE IBAN

by

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[Title Page]

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY : COGNATES

601 Having sketched in some of the salient features of Iban society I shall now turn to a brief discussion of their system of kinship terminology. In this discussion I shall be chiefly concerned with an examination of some of the ways in which the kinship terminology of the Iban reflects or is functionally consistent with the more important relationships and distinctions of their social structure. This approach to kinship terminologies is by no means a new one,[24] and its cogency has been amply demonstrated in recent decades by Radcliffe-Brown and others. Most of these studies, however, have been concerned with unilineal societies and the modern literature on kinship in purely cognatic societies is a sparse one. There is thus some ground for looking at the Iban system from this point of view.

The main terms of reference for cognates are shown in Figure 1, and those for affines in Figures 2 and 3. In an appendix the main terms of address have also been listed.

Let me begin with the terms used for cognates. The first point I would like to note is that there are no distinctions

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601 in terminology based on the sex of the speaker.[25] This, I would argue, is consistent with the fact that in all matters [562] of property, inheritance and the like, both within the family and beyond it, males and females have equivalent jural rights. Males and females, then, address their cognates by the same set of terms.

Next, I would like to direct attention to an important general feature of the Iban system of kinship terminology. The whole system, it will be observed, is bilaterally symmetrical. In other words, none of the relationships traced through one's mother are distinguished terminologically from homologous relationships traced through one's father.

Thus :

(a) father's sister and mother's sister are both referred to by the term : ibo;

(b) father's brother and mother's brother are both referred to by the term aya;

(c) all first cousins (i.e. both parallel and cross-cousins, and on both sides) are referred to by the term : petunggal.[26]

601 612 [611] In all of these instances it can be shown that the relationships referred to by the same term have, in general, the same structural significance. In the absence of any unilineal principle of descent father's siblings do not assume any differential significance, either jurally or in any other way, as against mother's siblings. Both are equally available to Ego should he wish to seek assistance, and both are equally expected to give such assistance should it be sought. Similarly, at rituals held by Ego (or for him after his death) father's siblings and mother's siblings are equally entitled to shares of property

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612 distributed to cognates. The same considerations apply to all of an individual's first cousins (and beyond to second and third cousins, etc.). Again, all of these cousins (if they be of the opposite sex to Ego) are equally available as partners in marriage. It is possible then to make the generalization that beyong the bilek rights and duties within the personal kindred are so balanced as to be bilaterally symmetrical.[27]

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852 The Iban (with an attention to detail that delights the ethnographer) have symbolized this in one of their more important personal rites, the gawai tusok, which is concerned with the ritual piercing of a child's ear lobes. The piercing of the ear lobes is an event of moment in the life of an individual for it is believed that on the proper performance of the operation will depend his (or her) subsequent health and welfare. The rites are elaborate, involving the invocation of tutelary gods and the employment of special charms and magical materials; the culmination of the gawai is the actual piercing of the ears with a small steel auger. It is a common practice to have the lobe of one ear pierced by a cognate of the father and that of the other by a cognate of the mother, so symbolizing the child's equal dependence on both sides of his (or her) personal kindred.

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593 An individual's siblings, it will be noted, are all referred to by the same term ᵻ nenyadi. In other words brothers are not distinguished from sisters; furthermore the term nenyadi is applied to all brothers and sisters irrespective of seniority within the sibling group. Similarly, no distinction is made by either parent in respect of his (or her) children; both sons and daughters (of whatever birth order) are referred to by the same term ᵻ anak. These two usages may also be cited as instances of kinship terminology reflecting basic jural rights, for as

601 593 remarked earlier in this paper sons and daughters irrespective of age possess full and equal rights over the family estate.[28]

601 From the facts I have now cited it will be seen that the Iban system of kinship terminology (in its terms of reference) is of the type called Eskimo by Murdock.[29] That is, cross-cousins are referred to by the same term petunggal as parallel cousins; but distinguished from siblings who are referred to as penyadi.[30]

Another feature of the Iban system of kinship terminology is the clear demarcation of kin by generation. No term is used in more than one generation level; there are no inter-generation reciprocals. This leads us to a principal regularity in Iban kinship behaviour : all cognates at any generation level stand in a subordinate relationship to all those of the immediately senior generation, and in a superordinate relationship to all those of the immediately junior generation. This is expressed most clearly 601 593 in the relationship between parent and child. It is the duty of parents to care for their children and to instruct them in the traditional ways of the Iban; in these as in other matters they have authority over their children who are expected to show them deference and respect. For example, there should be no undue levity between child and parent; again a child must not address a parent by his (or her) personal name, nor by the familiar term wai.[31]

601 The terms apai (father) and indai (mother) as terms of reference apply to an individual's own parents; as terms of address, however, apai and indai are extended within the personal kindred to embrace all males and females of the parental generation. It is common practice, for example, to address uncles on both sides of the kindred as apai, and aunts as indai; and the same practice holds for the cousins of both parents. Similarly, all cognates on the same generation as one's own children may be addressed as anak. The

601 general superordination-subordination relationship of parent and child is also extended to all of these classificatory categories, though its force diminishes as genealogical distance increases. 601 It can be said, therefore, that the classificatory terms of 835 address : apai, indai and anak serve as indicators of kinship behaviour. This is seen most clearly in the regulation of sexual relations between cognates. The prohibition of relations between siblings as also between members of the same bilek is made so obvious as a child grows up as to be taken for granted; these are rules, moreover, the application of which is most plain. The prohibition of relations between cognates who are not on the same generation level is a pervasive rule applying, in theory, to all such cognatic kin. Parents make no attempt to nominate for their children all of the individuals in this prohibited category; instead; as they grow up, children are told that they may not jadi (marry) anyone they address as (a) apai or indai, and (b) as anak. In this way the prohibition is unequivocally expressed and in a readily comprehensible way.

602 In contrast to the authority-respect relationship between 603 members of adjacent generations, that which exists between members of alternate generations is of the kind usually described as a joking relationship. Thus, although grandparents are expected to help in the education of their grandchildren and to this end may exercise discipline over them, grandchildren are, in general, treated with great affection and indulgence. Further, by custom, grandchildren are licensed to joke (tau nundi) with their grand- 601 parents. The terms for grandmother (ini) and grandfather (aki) are extended (both in reference and address) to include all collateral cognates of the same generation; similarly, the term ucho (grandchild of either sex) is applied to all collateral descendants on the same generation level as one's own grandchildren.[32]

601 The rationale of the Iban kinship system for cognates will now have become apparent. In the absence of unilineal descent groups of any kind there is no need in Iban society to distinguish, unilaterally, different sets of collateral kin, or specific unilateral kinship roles; instead, at each generation level all collaterals are seen as homologous. In its essentials 601 the whole system may be looked on as a simple extension of the 596 relationships existing within the three generation stem family (consisting of grandparents, children and grandchildren) which, as we have seen, is a modal form of the bilek family. Thus, in respect of general kinship behaviour, collateral cognates are viewed in approximately the same way as lineal kin of the stem 601 family. For example, beyond the bilek :

(a) all cousins are viewed as being like siblings, and are addressed by the same classificatory term : menyadi;

(b) all collaterals of the first ascending generation are viewed as being like parents, and are addressed by the same classificatory terms : apai and indai;

(c) all collaterals of the second ascending generation are viewed as grandparents, and addressed by the same classificatory terms : aki and ini;

(d) all collaterals of the first descending generation are viewed as children, and addressed by the same classificatory term : anak;

(e) all collaterals of the second descending generation are viewed as grandchildren, and addressed by the same classificatory term : ucho.

These pervasive characteristics of the Iban kinship system for cognates are summarized in Table 1.

Ego's Relationship with Cognates :	Type of Relationship	Terms of Reference	Classificatory Terms of Address	Use of Personal Names, and the Familiar Term : wai	Generations
grandparents	joking relationship	aki ini	aki ini	Personal names not commonly used; wai may be used in joking	Second ascending generation
(i) parents (ii) uncles & aunts	respect relationship	(i) apai indai (ii) aya ibo	apai indai	Personal names and wai must not be used	First ascending generation
(i) siblings (ii) cousins	solidarity relationship	(i) menyadi (ii) petunggal	menyadi (aka or adi)	Personal names used; wai may be used	Ego's generation
(i) children (ii) nephews & nieces	authority relationship	(i) anak (ii) akan ando	anak	Personal and pet names used; wai not used	First descending generation
grandchildren	joking relationship	ucho	ucho	Personal and pet names used; wai may be used in joking	Second descending generation

E G O (male or female)

TABLE 1

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY : AFFINES

601 The Iban system of terminology for affines exhibits the same general characteristics as that for cognates. Thus, the whole system (both for the cognates of Ego's spouse and the affines of Ego's cognates) is bilaterally symmetrical. For example, both the patrilateral and matrilateral aunts and uncles of Ego's spouse are known as entua mata ari, and both parents as entua. Again, all of a spouse's cousins, on both sides of his (or her) kindred are called ipar (the same term as for spouse's siblings). Similarly, with the affines of Ego's cognates, the wives of both patrilateral and matrilateral uncles are termed ibo, and the husbands of both patrilateral and matrilateral aunts, aya (cf. Figure 3). Here, as in the case of cognates, this symmetry in terminology reflects structural equivalence.

606 Affinal kin are also clearly demarcated on a generational basis. Particularly noteworthy is the avoidance relationship which exists between a menantu (child-in-law) and entua (parent-in-law). Here, as with parent and child, the entua is superordinate and the menantu subordinate. Sexual relations between [835] the two are severely prohibited, and all familiarity and joking interdicted. These aspects of the relationship are expressed in [551] a strong prohibition (with supernatural sanctions) against a menantu uttering the personal name of his (or her) entua. These prohibitions also apply to all of the siblings of both parents-in-law (i.e. to all of an individual's entua mata ari).[33]

602 The relations between affines of alternate generations also resemble those existing between cognatic kin. Thus, the spouse of a grandchild is, in general, treated in the same way as a grandchild. Similarly, between affines on the same generation

602 level (e.g. ipar and duai) there are relations of familiarity and solidarity resembling those which exist between siblings and cousins.[34]

601 An affinal term which deserves especial mention is isan,
602 which is used reciprocally by parents whose children (i.e. one or more) marry one another. At the time a marriage is contracted
[57] there is almost always disagreement between parents over the selection of place of marital residence, but after the resolution of this difficulty resentments are usually forgotten, and where marriages are stable and productive the relationship between isan becomes one of mutual helpfulness and friendliness. It will
[62] be noted that when children are born of a marriage both sets of isan become members of the personal kindreds of these children. Again, because the bilek is an exogamous group the isan relationship never occurs within the same bilek family; instead, it is always a link between bilek and is, therefore, of importance in the wider social structure.

602 As indicated earlier in this paper affinal kin are of great consequence in the kinship structure of Iban society. In the bilek, for example, affinal ties have an importance fully comparable to that of ties between natal members. Furthermore, it can be shown that all affinal relationships (with the exception of that linking isan) closely resemble in their social functions homologous cognatic ties. This point is well appreciated by the Iban themselves, who when asked to explain the significance of affinal relationships commonly compare them directly to relationships existing between cognates. For example, it is said that the relationship between ipar (siblings-in-law, etc.) is like that between menyadi (siblings) and petunggal (cousins). Again, sntua are often described as being virtually equivalent to father and

602 mother (itong apai indai), and menantu as nearly the same as sons and daughters (runding anak). As noted earlier a menantu
606 acquires full membership of the bilek into which he (or she)
768 marries; moreover, this jural incorporation is accompanied by a
597 gradual psychological absorption until a menantu does become virtually 'a child of the family'. This process is nicely illustrated in the Iban custom whereby a menantu who has become a widow or widower may be ritually transformed into a son or daughter (anak). In such a case there is an adjustment of kinship terms, and the new son or daughter is free to marry again, although it is usually insisted that such an adopted affine should remain resident in the bilek of his (or her) adoption.[35] In general terms then, affinal relationships may be said to reduplicate in their significance the basic cognatic relationships of Iban society.

593 Finally, let me comment briefly on the most important affinal relationship of all : that of husband and wife. The conjugal tie, as we have already seen, is basic to the structure of the bilek family, and of crucial significance to the kinship system as a whole.[36] Monogamy is reflected in the fact that the
[501] terms laki (husband) and bini (wife) can be applied to only one person at a time. Between husband and wife there is no clearly structured pattern of superordination-subordination; although
[562] there is a sharply demarcated sexual division of labour, and a differentiation of ritual and other roles, a husband and wife, in
[521] their family life, are equals. Again, marriage among the Iban rests not on status, class, clan membership, or any other kind of prescriptive structural consideration but on the affection and regard which a husband and wife have for one another. It is understandable, therefore, that the bond between husband and wife, in the opinion of the Iban is, ideally, closer than that between siblings.

546 512 601 A husband and wife always live together as members of the same household; indeed, the conjugal tie is the only relationship - affinal or cognatic - which invariably occurs within the confines of the bilek family. The conjugal tie may be looked on then as the keystone of the bilek family. In particular, it is important to realize that a bilek family in the arrangement of its affairs has available to it the cognates of all its members, both natal and affinal. From the point of view of the senior natal members of a bilek, the cognates of an in-married member are kaban tampil, or affines; but to the children of the marriage they are part of these children's personal kindreds, or kaban candal. In this way, as generation succeeds generation, affinal relationships become cognatic relationships and part of the network that forms the wider kinship structure of Iban society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

114 121 Social structure theory as it has been developed over recent years has been predominantly concerned with societies having unilineal descent groups. In this field valuable results have been attained. In comparison our understanding of cognatic or bilateral societies (which are not very much less numerous) is lamentable.[37] Preoccupation with unilineal descent systems can lead to dangerously lop-sided views of social structure in general, as, for example in Radcliffe Brown's assertion that "unilineal institutions in some form are almost, if not entirely, a necessity in any ordered social system."[38] Although thorough studies may still be sparse we do know enough about some of the several hundred bilateral societies still in existence to be able to demonstrate that there are a number of solutions alternative to unilineal descent all of which result in ordered social systems. The Iban solution in which

114 family corporations are perpetuated by a system of utrolateral
121 filiation is one of them. This type of family, supported as it is by the ramifying cognatic kinship structure of the Iban does result, beyond any question, in an ordered social system. Furthermore, if the expansion of the Iban people during the past 150 years of their history be any criterion, it is also an efficient system.[39]

It would be of the greatest interest for social anthropological theory if a detailed comparative study of the morphology of bilateral kinship systems could be undertaken. Unfortunately, the dearth of modern structural analyses prevents this. Many of the world's bilateral societies are to be found in Southeast Asia and the Insular Pacific. It is to be hoped that research in these regions during the coming years will provide the materials for a comparative analysis of bilateral social structures of the kind already achieved for the unilineal systems of Africa.[40]

Figure 1

COGNATES (Kaban mandal)

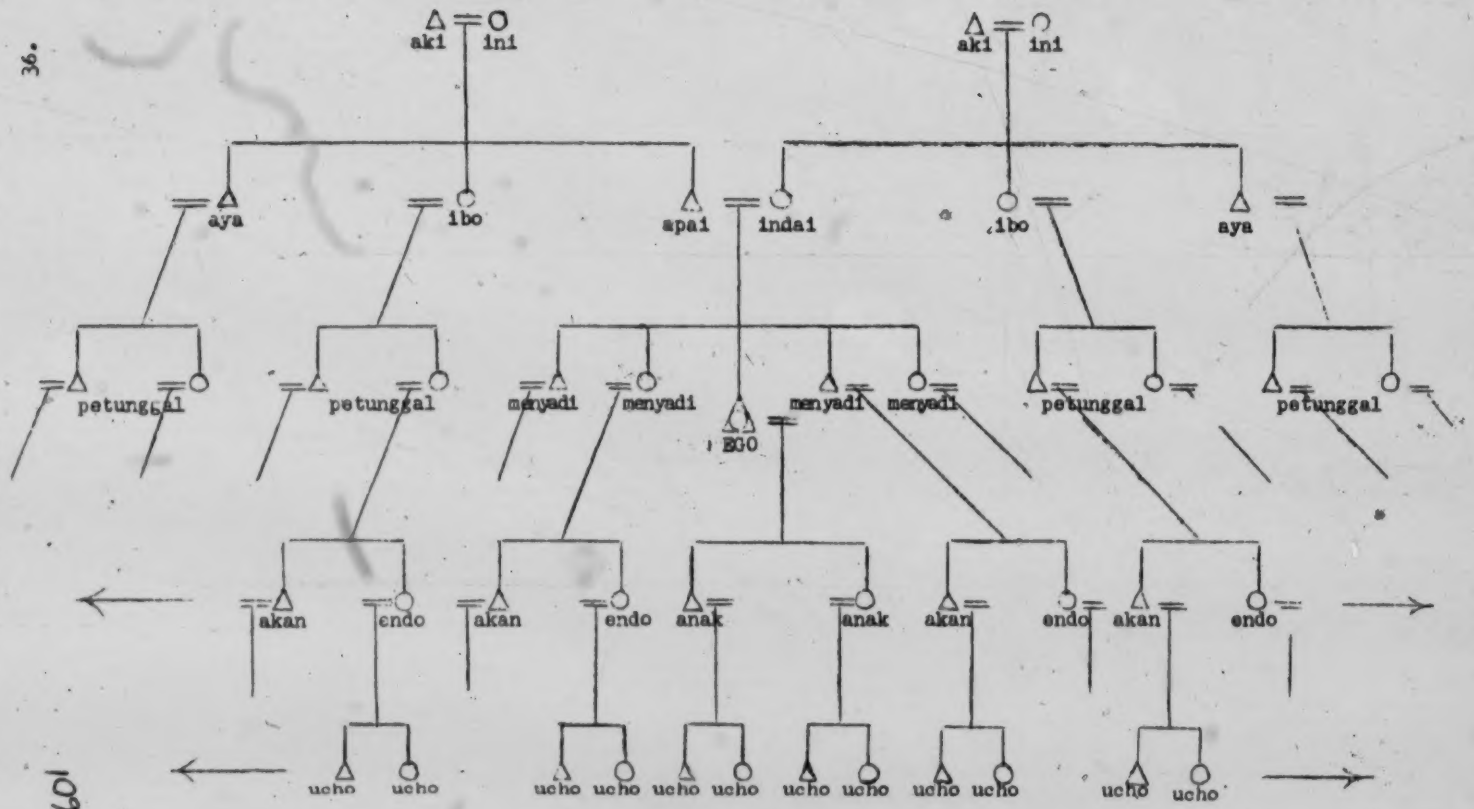

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Figure 2 A F F I N E S (Kaban tampil)

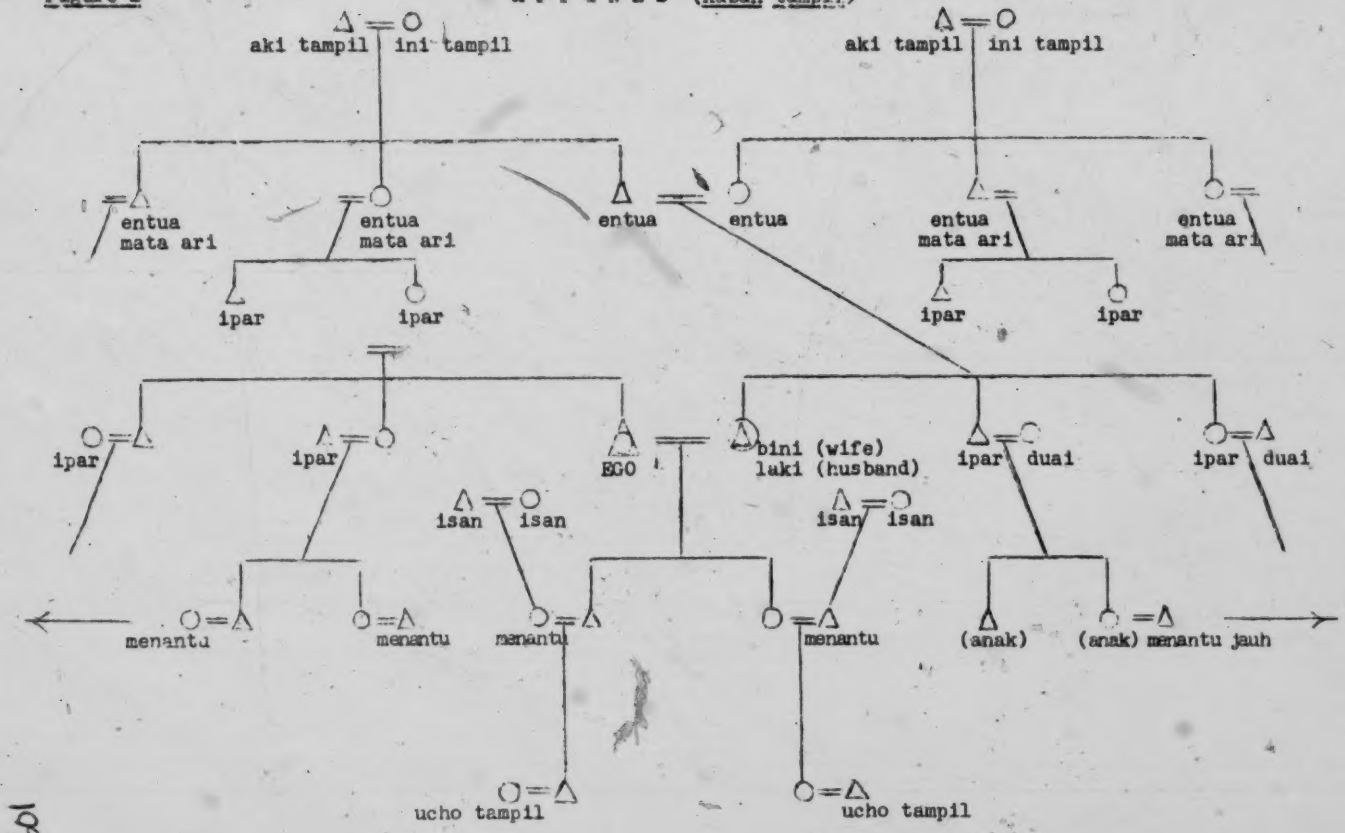

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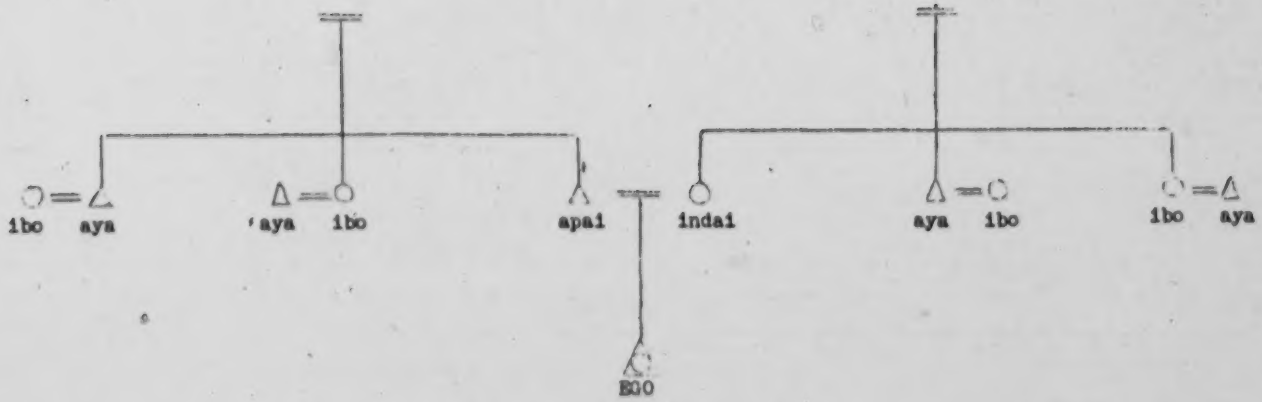
Figure 3 A F F I N E S (Kaban tampil)



APPENDIX : KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

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Cognates

	Terms of Reference	Terms of Address	Referents
Second Ascending Generation	aki	aki	grandfather (father's father and mother's father); grandfather's brother; etc.; grandmother's brother; etc.
	ini	ini	grandmother (mother's mother and father's mother); grandmother's sister; etc.; grandfather's sister; etc.
First Ascending Generation	apai	apai	father
	indai	indai	mother
	aya	aya or apai	father's brother; mother's brother; father's male cousin; mother's male cousin
	ibo	ibo or indai	mother's sister; father's sister; mother's female cousin; father's female cousin
Ego's Generation	menyadi	menyadi; or aka if older, adi if younger	sibling (male or female)
	petunggal	petunggal or menyadi (aka if older, adi if younger)	any cousin (male or female) on the same generation level as Ego
First Descending Generation	anak	anak	child (son or daughter)
	akan	akan or anak	sibling's son; cousin's son
	endo	endo or anak	sibling's daughter cousin's daughter

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Second Descending Generation	ucho	ucho	grandchild; sibling's grandchild; cousin's grandchild
Third Descending Generation	ichit	ucho	great-grandchild; sibling's great-grandchild; cousin's great-grandchild

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Affines

	Terms of Reference	Terms of Address	Referents
Second Ascending Generation	aki tampil	aki	spouse's father's father; spouse's father's uncle; spouse's mother's father; spouse's mother's uncle
	ini tampil	ini	spouse's mother's mother; spouse's mother's aunt; spouse's father's mother; spouse's father's aunt
First Ascending Generation	entua	apai or aya	spouse's father
	entua	indai or ibo	spouse's mother
	entua mata ari	apai or aya	spouse's father's brother; spouse's father's male cousin; spouse's mother's brother; spouse's mother's male cousin
	entua mata ari	indai or ibo	spouse's mother's sister; spouse's mother's female cousin; spouse's father's sister; spouse's father's female cousin
	aya (laki ibo)	aya or apai	father's sister's husband; mother's sister's husband
	ibo (bini aya)	ibo or indai	mother's brother's wife; father's brother's wife
Ego's Generation	laki	personal name; teknonym; wai	husband
	bini	personal name; teknonym; wai	wife

	ipar	ipar; or iku if older than Ego's spouse, adi if younger	spouse's sibling (male or female); spouse's cousin (male or female); sibling's spouse; cousin's spouse
	duai	duai; or iku or adi (as for ipar above)	spouse's sibling's spouse
	isan	isan	parent (male or female) of child's spouse; sibling (male or female) of parent of child's spouse
First Descending Generation	menantu	igat or anak	daughter's husband; sibling's daughter's husband
	menantu	endo or anak	son's wife; sibling's son's wife
Second Descending Generation	ucho tampil	ucho	grandchild's spouse; sibling's grandchild's spouse

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000 20. In 1936, when a section of the adat of the Third Division Iban was codified under the authority of the Third Rajah, this fine was set at $15. In 1952 it was increased to $30. A Malay dollar is valued at 2s. 4d. sterling. (Sea Dayak Fines, 1940; Tusun Tunggu Iban, 1955)

21. If first cousins marry there is a 50% over-lap, but this will be increased if they are related on more than one side - as sometimes happens. Theoretically, universal first cousin marriage (i.e. in all generations) would result in the complete coincidence of the two categories kaban pandai and kaban tampil.

22. At Rumah Nyala, for example, the linkage of bilek families to the rest of the long-house community was traced (either exclusively or predominantly) from a natal bilek member in 62% of instances, and from an in-married bilek member in 38% of instances.

23. This statement applies only to pioneer areas, like the Baleh, where land is not in short supply. In some parts of Sarawak, such as the Second Division, the adverse population-land balance prevents or severely inhibits the movement of bilek families from one long-house to another. In the Baleh region rubber is now becoming widely established as a cash crop and already the population has become more sedentary than under the traditional subsistence economy based on shifting cultivation.

24. Cf. Starcke, 1889, p. 207 : "A consideration of the whole series of our researches .... will show that .... the nomenclature was in every respect the faithful reflection of the juridical relations which arose between the nearest kinsfolk of each tribe. Individuals who were, according to the legal point of view, on the same level with the speaker, received the same designation. The other categories of kinship were formally developed out of this standpoint."

25. I.e. Ego, in Figures 1-3, may be either male or female. This has been indicated by superimposing a circle (the symbol for a female) on a triangle (the symbol for a male).

601 26. Petunggal is the classificatory term applied to all cousins of whatever degree. However, petunggal is only applied to collateral cognates on the same generation level as Ego. There is no concept, among the Iban, of 'cousin once removed' as in the English kinship system. First cousins are more exactly described as petunggal diri ponyadi (cousins sprung from siblings) or petunggal se kali (cousins for the first time). More remote degrees of cousinship are indicated by numerical phrases : petunggal dua kali, second cousins; petunggal tiga kali, third cousins, etc.

612 27. It often happens that differential ease of communication results in an individual becoming more closely associated with one side of his (or her) personal kindred than the other. This, however, does not alter the fact that, beyond the bilek, both sides are de jure equally available for all the purposes of kinship.

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601 28. As a term of address menyadi is commonly extended to include all cousins (petunggal). Alternative terms of address for cousins are : potunggal or unggal. Again, both siblings and cousins (male and female) may be addressed by the terms aka and adi; aka for siblings and cousins older than oneself and adi for those younger. These terms of address have about them a tone of affection associated with the sentiments that arise from the inter-dependence of siblings and cousins who grow up together. The vocatives aka and adi are in no way related to jural rights; during disputes between siblings, for example, they are dropped in favour of the more formal term : menyadi.

29. Murdock, 1949, p. 223.

30. In its terms of address, however, the Iban system conforms to Murdock's Hawaiian type, for as a vocative the term menyadi may be used in a classificatory way to address any cousin on either side of the personal kindred.

31. Cf. p. 12.

32. The term of reference for a great-grandchild is ichit. Ichit, however, is never used as a vocative; instead, great-grandchildren are always addressed as ucho.

606 835 33. There is unfortunately insufficient space to discuss the avoidance relationship of menantu and entua in any detail. I would argue that the ritual prohibitions associated with this relationship have the primary purpose of precluding the possibility of sexual relations between menantu and entua. Whereas the moral sentiments which interdict incestuous behaviour between child and parent (and parent's siblings) are adequately internalized in the process of socialization, this does not happen for an entua whose identity is not known until a marriage takes place. (It is significant to note, for example, that there is no comparably severe attitude of avoidance between a male child and the wives of his uncle, or a female child and the husbands of her uncles, all of whom a child is likely to have known from infancy. These affines are called ava or ibo, and are not regarded as entua.) As the survival of a bilek depends very largely on the maintenance of proper relations between entua and menantu it can be seen that the ritual prohibitions associated with this affinal tie serve an important social function.

601 34. Iper is also used as a term of address. Alternatively, an iper may be addressed as ika if older than Ego's spouse, or adi if younger. Duai refers to the relationship between the spouses of a pair of siblings, i.e. a double affinal relationship. (Cf. Figure 2)

35. In many respects the kinship system of the Iban resembles that of the contemporary United States, cf. Talcott Parsons, 1943.

000 36. Of the world ethnographic sample of 565 societies compiled by Murdock (1957) : 247 have patrilineal descent, 85 have matrilineal descent, 29 have double descent and 204 bilateral descent. (Murdock : personal communication, 1957)

37. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, p. 48.

38. I shall be dealing more fully with many of the issues touched on in this summary paper in a forthcoming book on Iban social structure.

39. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, 1950; Fortes, 1953.

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